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challenge



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HAITIAN WORKERS NEED TO DUMP ALL OPPRESSORS



The capitalist hypocrisy of the Bush gang knows no bounds. The same bunch that invaded Iraq to "bring democracy" there now has stormed into Haiti to support a coup d'état by the former death squads which terrorized the Haitian masses over a decade ago. Even before the UN gave its support to a "peacekeeping force," U.S. Marines invaded Haiti again, just like in 1888, 1891, 1914, 1915, 1994.

Aristide, who Bill Clinton installed in power with 20,000 U.S. troops in 1994, was now given the "choice" by the U.S. ambassador to leave the presidency either on a Lear Jet or in a body bag. Now the drug-dealing death-squad "rebels" (CIA-armed via the government of the neighboring Dominican Republic) are in Port-au-Prince. The workers and youth who "welcomed" these murderers are cutting their own throats.

The White House disliked Aristide for many reasons — maybe for being too close to one of the Bushites' many worst enemies, the liberal Clinton gang; or for bringing hundreds of Cuban doctors to work among the poor (Miami's Cuban exiles, crucial to Bush winning Florida in November, helped finance the armed "rebels"). All this despite everything Aristide did to serve imperialism and capitalism: signing a sweetheart deal with the U.S.-dominated International Monetary Fund; allowing construction of free trade zones that super-exploit workers; and even profiting off the drug trade. But the White House responded by cutting aid packages, enforcing embargoes and rumor-mongering.

U.S. imperialism funded all sectors of Aristide's opponents. The bosses never quite trusted him to serve their interests, even when Clinton restored him to power in 1994. They gave money to the whole spectrum of political opposition: from Hubert DeRonceray's right-wing, pro-Duvalier party, all the way to Gerald Charles-Pierre's "left" OPL (which split from Aristide's own Lavalas party), as well as to the "civil society" represented by industrialist-sweatshop millionaire Andy Apaid. According to an OPL member in the U.S., in the last few weeks the State Department told the political and civil opposition in the "Democratic Platform" not to negotiate power-sharing with Aristide. Thus, his last-ditch attempts to save his skin were constantly rebuffed by the political opposition.

The so-called rebels directed by Guy Philippe (a former Aristide police officer) and Louis-Jodel Chamblain — a former army officer and death-squad leader responsible for the murder of over 1,000 Haitians during the 1991 coup ousting Aristide — practically walked in and took over cities and towns throughout northern, northeastern and eastern Haiti, meeting little if any resistance.

What happens next remains to be seen. But one thing is certain: this is a dogfight between different groups of capitalists and their puppets. The French bosses hated Aristide because he demanded repayment of money Haiti had given France as reparations after the anti-slave rebellion that defeated

Trillions Stolen From Baby Boomers' Social Security Pay For Bosses' War

Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan is calling for an increase in the Social Security retirement age to 67 while cutting benefits, all to cover the soaring federal deficit created by the war budget and the \$1.7 trillion tax cuts for billionaires scheduled between 2001 and 2010. He says that's the only way to pay for the "Baby Boomers" retirement that will start coming due in eight years. But Social Security taxes generate a huge surplus over benefits paid out.

Each generation of workers pays Social Security taxes to support the previous generation's retirement. According to the bosses' law, those taxes are supposed to go into the Social Security Trust Fund to pay for current and future retirees' pensions.

But in 1968, faced with a skyrocketing deficit caused by the billions spent on the Vietnam War, the Johnson administration started transferring the Social Security surplus into the general budget (labeled the "Unified Federal Budget"). Allen Schick of the Brookings Institution says, "This is illegal. By law, Social Security is excluded" from the general budget. But, "in practice, it is included." (N.Y. Times, 1/31/95)

Between 1968 through the year 2012, U.S. imperialism will have been paying for its war machine by stealing over FIVE TRILLION of these surplus dollars from the Social Security Trust Fund.

Every Democratic and Republican administration has taken the surplus generated by Social Security to "lower" that year's deficit, mainly caused by the multi-billion dollar war budget. Clinton's Federal budget "surplus" was "a mirage," according to a N.Y. Times editorial (11/9/98), "due to a big surplus in Social Security...which was spent on other things."

According to South Carolina Senator Ernest Hollings, if these annual Social Security surpluses had remained in the Trust Fund, just starting from 1999 it would have created "a \$3.2 TRILLION reserve in 2012 when payments to retiring baby boomers will start to exceed revenue." (N.Y. Times, 11/9/98)

A ruling class bent on endless imperialist wars to preserve capitalism

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Capitalist Dogfight Victimizes Haitian Masses

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Napoleon's army. France took advantage of a weakened Haiti to force compensation for losing its richest possession. Now France, which clamored for Aristide's ouster before Bush did, has a foothold in its old colony. Racism also unites Chirac and Bush; both want to bar "an influx of Haitian refugees — the Bush administration to Florida...and France to its Caribbean

provinces." (NY Times, 3/3)

At the same time, France will be better able to compete with the U.S. in part of the latter's Latin-American turf. Contradictions will sharpen among the imperialists.

For the impoverished working masses, it hardly matters who comes next: whether it's the "U.S. candidate," Marc Bazin (former World Bank official and Finance Minister under Baby Doc Duva-

lier); or Leslie Manigat ("elected" president by the military junta that ruled after the fall of Duvalier); or some other clown who will be allowed to serve only at the discretion of the U.S. and other imperialists. It also doesn't matter *what* comes next: the expected re-constitution of the Haitian Army (a tool to repress real workers' rebellion) led by the old TonTon Macoute officer corps; or an extended foreign occupation.

The Haitian urban and rural workers and youth have a long history of rebelling against their oppressors. Two centuries ago they kicked out the French slaveowners. Then they defeated Napoleon's powerful army. More recently they sent "Baby Doc" Duvalier packing to Paris. They forced Clinton to bring back "reformer" Aristide in 1994 when U.S. bosses feared a more radical mass uprising against the Gen. Cedras death-squad regime. Now that the death squads are back in power, Haiti's exploited masses must carry the struggle even further: uniting with their



These "rebels" who marched into Port-au-Prince are the new exploiters.

brothers and sisters in the Caribbean-Latin America region and elsewhere to crush the endless cycle of misery capitalism creates. Pick up the red flag and join the Progressive Labor Party in building a mass international communist movement. ☛

Why Impoverished Haiti Is Important

Haiti, the Hemisphere's poorest country, has been devastated by corrupt repressive regimes and the austerity measures of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, which have destroyed its agriculture. Haiti is important because, (1) it's located near Cuba and can serve as a back-up U.S. military base for Guantanamo to protect the oil tankers coming from Venezuela (whose President Chavez is also on the Bushites' hit list)

and the oil refineries in Trinidad-Tobago; and (2) Haiti is now a transshipment point for 14% of all cocaine headed to the U.S. from South American drug cartels.

This drug money provides billions not only for the cartels, but also for the banks (many in Florida) which launder the money; and for the drug gangs (including the CIA-backed armed "rebels" now occupying Port-au-Prince). The drug money is also used to re-pay Haiti's huge debt to international lenders stemming from IMF-World Bank policies.

How to 'Save' U.S. Jobs? Put 'em in Jail!

"It's like bringing little islands of the Third World right here in the heartland of America," said Oregon Univ. professor Gordon Lafer, author of a study on prison labor. "You get the same total control of the workforce, the same low wages and it does nothing for the inmates." He was talking about capitalism's most "cost-effective" way to keep jobs here in the U.S. — by shifting them into prisons.

And he added, the "convicts don't benefit much from the training for jobs that no longer exist in America because they have all gone overseas or into prisons."

As part of a national trend, Oregon is recruiting companies that would otherwise move offshore, like Michigan-based Perry Johnson, Inc., to create a "niche where the prison industry could really help the U.S. economy." So said the state's director of the agency that recruits for-profit businesses to prisons.

Perry Johnson chose the Snake River penitentiary near Ontario, Oregon,

because it's half the cost of moving to India. Here it pays workers \$30 a week for 40 hours — 75¢ an hour — without fear of strikes, demands for wage increases or health care or worries about workers making it to work on time. Oregon and many other states are now making garments and furniture, two industries that have largely moved offshore, for as little as 12¢-an-hour!

But use of prison labor is not merely a cheap labor device to reap racist super-profits. Under fascist laws like the Patriot Act, the growing use of prison labor borrows a page from Hitler's slave labor book, to win the general population to accept a future of fascism and war — and concentration camps for all those who oppose the bosses' system. ☛

Social Security Surplus Pays for Bosses' Wars

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and maintain world domination is sacrificing the retirement of current and future workers. The trillions in oil and war profits come from the value produced by our class. If the workers who create that value controlled it,

retired workers could live healthy lives, confident that their needs would be met. But that will only happen when capitalism's thieving system is destroyed by communist revolution. ☛

During the Reagan years, Greenspan headed a commission that established the Social Security Trust Fund to "guarantee" the revenue for the future baby boomers' retirement. But the "guarantee" was a scam. The Social Security surpluses were still siphoned into the "Unified Federal Budget."

Based on his recommendations, huge increases in Social Security taxes were pushed through. While Reagan was reducing income taxes for millionaires, workers' payroll taxes were climbing. In fact, 75% of U.S. taxpayers pay more in Social Security taxes than in income taxes.

Since 1983, U.S. workers have paid \$1.8 trillion more into Social Security than the Fund has paid out. "This year Americans will pay about 50 percent more in Social Security taxes than the government will pay out in benefits." (NY Times, 2/29/04) This was supposedly Greenspan's way of the baby boomers paying for their retirement in advance. But this "\$1.8 trillion....[in] advance payments have all been spent....running the federal government." (NYT, 1/29/04) Essentially this was a way of increasing taxes on workers' income to be used to pay for the ever-expanding war machine, a thievery that continues to this day.

Another rip-off of Social Security is the wage cap. As of 1995, the Social Security tax of 7.65% was taken out of all earnings up to an annual maximum of \$61,200. A married couple earning \$60,000 a year, pays an annual Social Security tax of about \$4,600 (7.65% on \$60,000). But a boss earning a million bucks a year pays the same \$4,600, because he is only being taxed on the first \$61,200 of his income. That means the boss's Social Security tax rate is really only one-half of 1% of his million-dollar salary (\$1,000,000 divided by \$4,600). That's how the rich get richer and the rest of us get screwed. ☛

WHAT WE FIGHT FOR

☛PLP fights to smash capitalism—wage slavery. While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions all over the world. The Soviet Union and China returned to capitalism because socialism maintained too many aspects of the profit system, like wages and divisions of labor.

☛Capitalism inevitably leads to wars. PLP organizes workers, students and soldiers to turn these wars into a revolution for communism. This fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat requires a mass Red Army led by the communist PLP.

☛Communism means working collectively to build a society where sharing is based on need. We will abolish work for wages, money and profit. Everyone will share society's benefits and burdens.

☛Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of race.

☛Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women workers.

☛Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.

☛Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers.

JOIN US!



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Teaching About Exploitation

The CHALLENGE article (2/18) on the exploitation of manufacturing baseballs will be used and re-used in my classroom. I still remember the excitement I felt when I first grasped Marx's theory of exploitation. At the time, like this article's writer, I remember thinking how complicated it was.

Here was an idea that could sustain revolutionary activity for a lifetime, but how to present it? Another teacher solved my problem by sharing this lesson plan with me.

We begin by making a bar-graph comparing the average gap between a CEO's salary and a manufacturing worker's wages. A U.S. CEO's pay is 34 times larger. ("Towers Perrin, Worldwire Total Remuneration," November 1999, quoted in "Teaching Economics as if People Mattered"). If a bar-graph representing the factory worker's wage is ½-inch tall, the CEO's bar would be 17 inches tall. We need two sheets of paper stuck together to accommodate it.

Then we turn to our role modeling. We are a small auto parts factory making seats for GM cars. Ten students are recruited to "work" in the factory. Most agree that at \$20/hour they're earning "good money." To be hired, however, they must agree to work 8 hours a day and make 8 car seats in those 8 hours, as well as do quality work since these seats sell for \$250 each. They sign on the dotted line. (I deliberately use a "good-paying" job because liberals continually equate the idea of exploitation only with the lowest-paying sweatshops).

We fast forward to the end of the day. Using play money I go down the line of production workers. Did they work 8 hours? Did they make 8 seats? Did they do quality work? "Yes, yes, yes," they reply and I give each one \$2,000 (8 x \$250).

Then I produce the contract they signed. They all agreed to work for 8 hours at \$20 an hour, or \$160. I go down the line again. They can keep "their"

\$160 but must return to me "my" \$1,840. As you can imagine, even though its "play" money there's always some students who don't want to give it all back!

After much cajoling I end up with "my" \$18,400 (10 workers times \$1,840 each). Of course, it's not all "mine." I must give the banker thousands in interest, the landlord thousands in rent and pay the suppliers thousands for the raw materials and energy. I'm "lucky" if I end up with "only" \$5,440 for the day (34 times the factory worker's pay)!

Is that fair? What would be fair? Can any wage be fair? I point out how some of the student-workers didn't want to give any of their money back to me, the owner. Were they right? We break into groups to discuss this and then (groan)

write up our conclusions. (They will be the subject of a future article.)

[Editor's Note: A Business Week online story, 4/21/03, presents 2003 figures. The average CEO makes \$7,400,000 a year. If the average worker is paid, say, \$30,000 a year, that would mean the CEO's now make 247 times the average worker.]✪



Sold-out Grocery Strikers Call for Class Solidarity

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, March 1 — "They're all thieves, the companies and the union [leaders]," Ralph's store cashier Carlos Beltran told the LA Times (3/1) "They're just sticking it to us." He was reacting to the five-month grocery strike of 70,000 workers that just ended here, part of a growing fascist attack on all workers, as U.S. imperialism tries to make workers pay for its endless wars to dominate the world's markets and oil supplies. The workers approved a new three year contract but many boycotted the vote. "It was take it, or there's the door," said Beltran.

The main strike issues were health benefits, pensions and a two-tier wage system. Current workers will pay higher co-payments for health benefits. Wages and benefits for new hires will be cut. Creation of a low-wage force becomes an incentive for the bosses to eliminate the higher-paid workers. No strikers were happy with this settlement. Some said it was worse than the bosses' original offer. But because workers saw no other alternative, the pro-capitalist union leadership was able to jam it through. The union leaders accept capitalism, war and fascism as being as "natural" as rain. But that's definitely not the whole story.

There were modest but important political developments. Many PLP members and friends went to picket lines with their unions and with water, food and literature, but not consistently enough. We underestimated the importance of winning our friends by supporting this strike while exposing the bosses' attacks as part of a broader political one.

The potential was evident at one store, where strikers were especially open and enthusiastic to our several visits. One worker had organized fellow strikers to go to the union hall demanding that the union resume picketing at Ralph's and at the food distribution centers so that Teamsters wouldn't drive the food to the struck markets. The union told Ralph's customers to shop, even though the bosses had locked out the workers. The union leaders claimed they had to pull the pickets because Ralph's was the only nearby store where customers could buy food. They were doing the bosses' work for them.

At this store, we interviewed the picket captain, a black woman with 28 years on the job. During the strike, she learned that *no* job is secure in this society. She said the union leaders had not prepared them for a long strike and that it was a bad idea to pull pickets from Ralph's. She said Ralph's shared its profits with the struck stores. This did not surprise her. "They're united," she said. "We have to be united."

Seventy percent of the customers supported the strike (the companies claimed they lost \$1.5 billion), but "many people are living in a fantasy world," the picket captain said. "They think this could never happen to them, but it will. The scabs think of 'me, me, me.' They need to learn class solidarity," she declared.

Another woman striker with 14 years at the store said that, while the strike had been very hard on her family, she and her husband used it to teach their children about the nature of the system. "We could only buy them food, nothing extra. They've learned that the things they need don't fall from the sky. We have to work very hard for them."

This Mexican worker explained that the strikers had become "family" — black, Latin and white; that neither the bosses nor the union leaders would be able to destroy this unity. She said the "middle class" is disappearing; there will only be rich and poor. "The poor grow the corn, make the clothes, do everything. We don't need them [the rich bosses]. They need us." When asked if the poor could live without the rich, including eliminating the rich, she replied, "Yes, we can do that too," agreeing that only a revolution could make that happen.

Another 17-year veteran striker got \$14,000 behind during the walkout. He called the scabs cowards, explaining that the strikers weren't fighting only for themselves but for all workers whose health benefits are endangered. He said workers should have organized to stop the scabs, even though "its against the law." When workers first organized against the scabs, the company videoed the strikers, to arrest them. This worker said from now on the rank and file would be more active in the union. The bosses' laws and cops are there to guarantee their profits.

Several strikers condemned the union's big rallies where politicians posed as the workers' saviors. That money should have been used to maintain strike benefits. The Democrats offer no solution, just empty promises. Strikers stressed the importance of teaching class consciousness to all youth and workers, that we're all part of one working class.

PLP intends to deepen our friendship with these workers, bring them CHALLENGE regularly, and invite them to join PLP. They must help teach the rest of the working class the need for class consciousness, unity and to fight for a communist society in which those who create all value use it to meet the needs of the working class, not the profits of the rich.✪

Transit Workers Fight War Budget Service Cuts

Transit workers and riders in a West Coast city are locked in a state of constant war with both the local transit bosses and capitalism. Management plans a third round of service cuts, just in the last fiscal year. From last June to December, service was cut 16% and 118 workers were sacked. Fares rose and transfer use was reduced in September.

Only a mass union petition campaign (initiated by a PLP member and led by the rank and file) that tied the December cutbacks to the Iraq war budget prevented even worse cuts. The union leadership pulled the plug on that campaign when the transit bosses agreed to "defer" 40% of the cuts until 2004. Well, 2004 is here and the bosses have become tongue-tied. "Defer" is no longer in their vocabulary.

While the working class will fight the cuts and layoffs — as we always have — more of us should be promoting communist revolution as the ultimate solution to this never-ending series of attacks. A war economy takes \$400 billion of workers' taxes for the U.S. military and \$357 billion for interest on the federal debt. Nearly \$150 billion has been spent on the invasion and occupation of Iraq, so far, to make it "safe" to steal oil profits. And \$38 billion for Homeland Security threatens workers who fight back. Recently, two county sheriffs' officers, identifying themselves as agents of Homeland Security, visited a union hall where workers were involved in supporting grocery strikers. This is fascism. Since when does a grocery strike threaten "national security"? When it threatens the security of capitalist profits!

To fund this brutality, no working-class service will be spared. It now takes a student from a downtown high school three buses and two hours to get to her East side home. The bus line that ran by her house was eliminated and another was cut in half. She often gets home too late to help her mother, who's recovering from surgery. This is an added stress to the recent public health cuts. Her school district is under state trusteeship and has planned closing five elementary schools. For workers and students, capitalism is a nightmare!

In the months ahead, transit workers will have many opportunities to develop communist leadership in the class struggle. We must unite riders and workers to battle the transit bosses on March 2 when they vote on their war cuts. During this struggle we will invite many to come to May Day. On May 1 workers can join transit and other workers and youth in Los Angeles to build PLP and the revival of the world communist movement.

Also, this July 1 three contracts in this metropolitan area expire. All districts threaten workers with cuts in medical coverage and jobs. We will organize to unite transit and other workers and urge them to join PLP for the long-term fight to destroy the system that needs fascism and war.✪

Profits Behind 'Concern' For Some Workers' Health



Capitalists invest in medical care and public health programs for many reasons: (1) To keep workers healthy enough so profits continue rolling in; (2) So workers are physically able to serve in the military; (3) To preserve the health of the bosses; (4) To avoid infectious epidemics that would undermine workers' health and threaten the bosses; (5) To generate profits from certain medical care sectors (drugs, equipment, some services); (6) To show that the system "works"; and (7) Provide concessions to workers' rebellions. This article will deal with point #1.

In the mid-19th Century, Edwin Chadwick and other members of the English ruling class passed the Sanitary and Fac-

tory Acts to improve conditions in the factories and working-class districts. These acts dramatically improved life expectancy in England.

Chadwick and the British rulers enacted these measures to keep the lid on epidemics that could threaten the rich and as a reaction to rising labor militancy reflected in the Chartist movement. But the primary reason was their concern that the English working class was being worked to death, and productivity and capital accumulation were threatened. Chadwick explained this in his "Inquiry into the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain":

"The depressing effect of adverse sanitary circumstances on the labouring strength of the population, and on its duration, is to be viewed with the greatest concern, as it is a depressing effect on that which most distinguishes the British people, and which...constitutes the chief strength of the nation — the bodily strength of the individuals of the labour-

ing class."

Decades later this public health "urge" came to John D. Rockefeller and U.S. bosses. (See "Rockefeller Medicine Men" by E. Richard Brown.) In the early 20th century, Rockefeller and his agents discovered that the inefficiency and "proverbial laziness" of workers in the southern U.S. were caused by anemia due to the hookworm, a parasite that enters the body through the soles of the feet. They established programs to eliminate it in the south and in many tropical countries targeted for investment. Although the Rockefeller programs did not completely eradicate the disease, they did control it in many areas.

They said the hookworm program was important "on account of the direct physical and economic benefits resulting from the eradication of the disease and also on account of the usefulness of this work as a means of creating and promoting influences."

Frederick Gates, a principal Rockefeller advisor, wrote that the stocks of cotton mills located in the parasite-infected

counties of North Carolina were worth less than mills in other counties "...due to the inefficiency of labor in these cotton mills, and the inefficiency of labor is due to the infection by the hookworm which weakens the operatives. It takes by actual count about 25% more laborers to secure the same results in the counties where the infection is heavier." It also meant 25% more housing, machinery, more capital and higher operating costs, and "this is why the stocks of such mills are lower and profits lighter." Many internal Rockefeller documents described the extent of hookworm infection and the loss in labor productivity. Increased productivity generally followed treatment programs in each area.

So the Rockefeller parasites declared war on the hookworm parasites to protect their profits. It was just good business. Under communism, medical care and public health programs will truly meet the physical and psychological needs of the international working class. ☸

Home Attendants 'Zoned for Slavery'; Need to 'Zone' Bosses for Extinction

World imperialism has essentially contracted out and "outsourced" much of the labor in the world — the working class has been "zoned for slavery." That's the title of a video I've often shown to ESL classes I teach in NYC, a film about workers in a free trade zone in Honduras.

While not exactly the same, my students have also been "zoned for slavery." They're home attendants, part of the 80,000-member Homecare Division of Local 1199-SEIU. Other thousands of attendants and home health aids here aren't unionized. Almost all are immigrant women workers.

Said one of my ESL students:

"I don't understand why an agency...in the union pays \$6.65 an hour. In special cases (persons [for whom]... everything has to be done in bed, who don't use pampers, defecate on the sheets which must be cleaned, in addition to the usual cleaning, cooking and washing) home attendants are paid \$7.65 a hour. Extra hours in these cases pay \$7.73 an hour. Extra hours (overtime) are after 45 hours...[not] after 40 hours. They don't pay sick days and personal days and we have to work a certain number of hours to get medical insurance. I know of persons who work 72 hours a week, 6 days, 12 hours a day, with 2 or 3 children. They can't dedicate themselves to their children and they kill themselves working, destroying their health and neglecting their children.

"To me it is necessary to get more knowledge about this kind of work....but it is bad what I see.... I would appreciate it if these irregularities (among which you have spoken are persons who work 24 hours and are only paid for 12 hours) come to light and...that we do something to better the situation."

The union has an apartheid system. Home attendants work 12 hours for straight pay and 24 hours for 12 hours pay with a small night differential. Workers in the Hospital Division work 8-hour shifts with an hour paid lunch and time and one-half after 8 hours, supposedly the "law" in the U.S.

There are plans to expose and fight these conditions for home attendants. In my classes workers have written letters and testimonies, like the one quoted above. I and some of these home attendants will attend a "Freedom Ride" conference sponsored by union, community and immigrant groups to present our case and expose 1199's duplicity and

hypocrisy.

One student is a union delegate; we'll try to persuade others to become delegates so we can better organize home attendants on a grassroots, struggle level. I'm in a social justice group of churches and community organizations that's organizing a forum for International Workers Day about globalization and free trade, at which several home attendants will speak. From this we'll propose some local actions.

We plan to consolidate two PLP study groups into one, combining social justice activists and home attendants. Hopefully this will strengthen both groups and EXPAND the network distribution of CHALLENGE from its current level of 30. As more workers join PLP, we can further develop them into politically conscious communist organizers in the unions, churches and groups to which they belong.

One of the "debate" issues in the Democratic Party primaries is free trade agreements. This "debate" is phony, manufactured to obscure the fact that "globalization" — imperialism, which Lenin called the highest stage of capitalism — has already consolidated power into the hands of a few capitalists who dominate all production: banking, industry, service, the media and military contracts. Loss of jobs in the U.S. while the U.S. occupation of Iraq is grinding down, terrorizing and killing Iraqi workers into submission to become yet another free trade zone, are permanent features of imperialism, as are endless wars. PLP members in the anti-globalization movement should concentrate on uniting workers internationally and fighting against "zones for slavery."

Ultimately imperialism cannot turn the clock back. Workers must "zone" it for extinction. A politically conscious, organized and internationally united working class can fight back constantly while re-building the international communist movement. Learning the lessons of the past movement and preparing the working class for the revolutionary seizure of power to build a new communist world that will abolish wage slavery and the imperialist profit system remains our road to liberation. ☸

Health Care 'Reforms' Aid Big Business

A New York Times article (2/8) supports CHALLENGE's claim that big U.S. bosses support some sort of government-sponsored health care plan in order to reduce their own health care expenses. It's based on a study released in December by the Manufacturers Alliance and the National Association of Manufacturers.

In terms of wages compared to total value added in manufacturing, the study found the U.S. "more competitive" than Canada, Germany, Britain and South Korea. But if "structural costs" are included, the cost of doing business in the U.S. rises 22.4%, exceeding costs in these other countries. One of the main "structural costs" is health care. "And the solution," reports the Times, "may be something that has traditionally been anathema to corporate chieftains: bigger government."

In all these other countries, both public and private money pays for health care. But U.S. businesses pay a larger chunk than their European and Asian counterparts. In Canada, the private sector spends 2.8% of gross domestic product on health care. In the U.S., the private-sector figure is 7.7%, and this falls mainly on big employers like GM, which covers the health care of 1.2 million people, costing \$4.5 billion.

One way U.S. bosses deal with this is eliminating retiree health care. In 2003, only 36% of large companies (500+ workers) provided a retiree medical plan to at least some retirees not eligible for Medicare, down from 50% in 1993. But now a major strategy is to support government-sponsored health care, like the prescription drug benefit enacted last summer, and have taxpayers foot the bill.

It's not clear what type of government-sponsored health plans will evolve. Some advocate a single-payer system, as in Canada. The majority of businesses seem to favor some sort of tax credits — rather than employers providing benefits, consumers would buy health care. But no matter what type of system emerges, the effect would be "to transfer the financial burden from companies to American taxpayers." (NYT) It won't be surprising to see major sections of the ruling class opt for increasing taxes. This is another reason why many of them disagree with Bush's tax cuts — they run counter to the ability to deal with the exorbitant healthcare costs (not to mention the money needed to maintain the bosses' war machine).

So all the new health care "reforms" are designed to take some of the burden off business, not to help workers. There's good reason to expect that the overall level of health care will continue to drop. After all, the bosses will likely need those taxes for other things, like prisons, Homeland Security fascism and wars. Communism is the real antidote to a health care system that fails to meet workers' needs. ☸

Finally, NY Times Admits Soviets Won World War 2

For 40 years, CHALLENGE and PLP have championed the heroism and achievements of the Soviet Union, its Red Army and its leader Joseph Stalin in saving the world from Nazi fascism in World War II. During that entire period, the Western imperialists, especially U.S. rulers, have degraded or even ignored the Soviet role, emphasizing and glorifying the U.S. and Britain as the heroes of North Africa and the Western Front, making movies about D-Day and Patton and Eisenhower which didn't even mention the titanic battles in the East.

Now suddenly the leading spokesman of the U.S. ruling class, the New York Times, has "discovered" the Soviet role in previously "unpublished archives" — as if they were heretofore unknown. In an article (2/21) entitled, "A Job for Rewrite: Stalin's War and Hitler's Downfall," the Times begins with the picture of World War II that the paper itself has painted for decades: "A plucky Britain refusing to bow to the Luftwaffe's blitz, Patton and Rommel dueling in the North African desert, the D-Day invasion and the Battle of the Bulge — these tend to dominate American's conception of the Allied defeat of Germany.... The decisive impact of America's erstwhile ally was often deliberately underplayed in the West for political reasons."

Then it admits that, "Military historians have always known that the main scene of the Nazis' downfall was the Eastern Front, which claimed 80% of all German military casualties in the war."

"The four-year conflict between the Wehrmacht and the Red Army remains the largest and possibly the most ferocious ever fought....The front extended 1,900 miles (greater than the distance from the northern border of Maine to the southern tip of Florida) and German troops advanced over 1,000 miles into Soviet territory (equivalent to the distance from the East Coast to Topeka, Kansas). And they clashed in a seemingly unrelenting series of military operations of

unparalleled scale; the battle of Kursk alone...involved 3.5 million men.

"In short, the war fought on the Eastern Front is arguably the single most important chapter in modern military history."

It repeats "the conventional view" (without mentioning the Times' role in spreading that view) that "Soviet tactics and performance were leaden and unimaginative." Now, citing the "latest findings," it says "the Soviets' brilliant use of encirclement and what they called 'deep battle' — extremely rapid, far-reaching advances behind the enemy's front lines — constituted the most innovative and devastating display of "operational art" in World War II. Soviet operations...were far superior to those of the German Army at its best."

Did this have anything to do with the nature of the first communist state, with the leadership of Stalin and

the main scene of the Nazis' downfall was the Eastern Front, which claimed 80% of all German military casualties in the war.

the Communist Party? One couldn't conclude that from reading the Times' article. Although the headline refers to "Stalin's War," he's not even mentioned in relation to the defeat of the most powerful army the world had seen up until that time. In issue after issue, in nearly every section of the "paper of record," year after year, Stalin is depicted as "worse than Hitler." But in tracing the gigantic development of the Soviet Union, even that arch imperialist, Winston Churchill, was forced to admit that, "Stalin came to Russia with



A Soviet assault defending Stalingrad

a wooden plough and left it in possession of atomic weapons." All in less than 20 years!

The Times and the bosses' media generally do not want workers to relate communist ideas and leadership to this monumental achievement that almost single-handedly saved the world from fascism. Had Hitler been able to conquer the Soviet Union, millions of people in Britain and the U.S. would have been killed. There probably would never have been a "baby boomer" generation.

Yes, in this first attempt to establish a communist state, amid all the achievements, serious errors occurred, many of which CHALLENGE has pointed out in our attempt to build on the positive aspects of the USSR while trying to avoid its weaknesses and develop a more successful road to communism. We must rely on the international working class to advance to that goal, even as we applaud the contribution of the Soviet Union, its Red Army and its leader Stalin that brought us as far as they could go. (For a full analysis of WW2 see the CHALLENGE Supplement of May 17, 1995)☺

Parmalat Milks Brooklyn Workers Right Out of Their Jobs

BROOKLYN, NY, March 1 — The international crisis of capitalism has many facets. Milan-based milk giant Parmalat is the latest billion-dollar company to be affected, fueled by the corruption of its bosses. The tentacles of Parmalat's Enron-type fraud have reached 450 Brooklyn workers who, along with thousands worldwide, may lose their jobs.

The NY Daily News (Feb. 25) reported: "The bankruptcy filing of Parmalat USA, a division of scandal-tainted Italian dairy company Parnalat Finanziaria, raised doubts yesterday about the future of its Sunnysdale Farms plant on Stanley Avenue in Brooklyn.'This company will be sold and the new owners might close Brooklyn and operate in New Jersey,' said a local dairy industry source. 'Brooklyn has a high cost of doing business.'"

The source said a number of suitors are interested in buying Parmalat and its two subsidiaries, Farmland Dairies, which distributes milk in the

New York area, and Milk Products of Alabama. A deal could be announced in a few weeks.

While workers could lose their jobs, Parmalat bosses won't lose much. A federal judge approved a \$17.5 million loan from GE Capital to allow the company to continue operating during the bankruptcy period. Parmalat expects to double that loan next month.

Company founder and former chairman Calisto Tanzi has been jailed, along with six other former executives after Parmalat failed to document \$11 billion missing from its accounts. The Milan-based parent company filed for bankruptcy in Italy in December ☺



Nurses 'Win' Overtime Reform, Bosses Close Hospital

Capitalism's drive for profits and reformist leaders' attempt to cover it up are central to the struggle of workers and patients at Philadelphia's Medical College of Pennsylvania (MCP) hospital. Last December, MCP nurses struck the Tenet Healthcare Corporation, mainly over mandatory overtime. For many years the nurses' contract had allowed this practice. An MCP nurse could be forced to work up to 16 hours a day to fill staffing shortages, with double time for the extra hours. This provision frequently discouraged the bosses from ordering it.

When Tenet moved to lower mandated overtime pay to time and one-half, the nurses balked. Citing studies proving mandatory overtime increased errors, the nurses insisted on eliminating the practice altogether. Tenet tried to smear the nurses as "disrupting patient care" but the latter won the public to realize that the strike was over patient safety.

The strike was as ineffective as are all strikes run by AFL-CIO sellouts. They made no serious effort to stop scab agency nurses from crossing the picket lines. Philadelphia labor leaders and some Democratic Party politicians gave little meaningful support, merely lip service. Union workers from Local 1199 crossed the lines.

Tenet then laid off many of these workers just before Christmas and blamed the nurses, winning these workers to do the same. Meanwhile, the 1199 leadership remained silent. Michael Nutter, the district's Democratic councilman, took Tenet's side. He attempted to paint the strikers as "overpaid and greedy," ignoring the real issue — patient safety.

Despite this mis-leadership, the nurses eventually won concessions. Mandatory overtime would end by June. Then, while the nurses were celebrating, Tenet announced the hospital would be closed in March. These backstabbing bosses had repeatedly lied to the nurses' negotiating committee, assuring them there was no plan to close the hospital.

The MCP hospital has a rich history in Philadelphia. It was founded by Quaker abolitionists over 150 years ago as a medical school for women. This hospital serves a black and Latin working-class community of 70,000. It's an important trauma center, but Tenet's bosses couldn't care less. They claim MCP is draining \$5,000,000 a month from their profits. And under capitalism, profits — not workers' health or jobs — is the bottom line.

Hospital workers and community residents are fighting to keep this important hospital open, a movement in which our PLP collective is participating. The struggle relies heavily on legal tactics and is controlled by Democratic Party politicians, including Nutter, who sold out the nurses. These misleaders, of course, don't expose capitalism as the cause of the healthcare crisis. However, angry workers do understand that this hospital closing is a racist attack on them on behalf of Tenet's profits.

By advancing our Party's line in this battle, we aim to win these workers to realize that only the destruction of capitalism can end such racist attacks. Building a communist world is the only way to fulfill all their needs!☺

An MCP worker

LETTERS

Kerry Liberal Warmonger

Our paper has long and consistently warned of the greater danger of the Democrats, partly because of the illusions they sow among the working class.

Democratic Party front-runner John Kerry spoke recently at a nearby university campus. A friend dragged me along. I must say it was an eye-opener for the mostly anti-Bush, anti-war crowd in the auditorium.

Kerry began by criticizing the war effort, calling Bush and his administration amateurs and "armchair hawks." He promised a "stronger, more comprehensive strategy for winning the war....than the Bush Administration has ever envisioned."

Kerry, faulting Bush repeatedly, declared, "I believe he has done too little," and called for adding 40,000 more active-duty army troops in Iraq. Because the U.S. is already in Iraq, it must finish its work there, he said. (This sounds exactly like Nixon's policy on Vietnam that Kerry supposedly opposed in 1971.)

On Homeland Security (aka the police state), this liberal proposed that domestic police and intelligence agencies be consolidated under the CIA in order to "break down barriers between national intelligence and local law enforcement." In this vein, he criticized Bush's tax cuts to the rich for endangering Homeland Security—"we can't afford not to fund Homeland Security."

My friend was a little shell-shocked, like many in the audience, when they heard this liberal warmonger speak.

I made sure my co-worker had several CHALLENGES in his hand when we left. Now that he has heard war and fascism advocated from the horse's mouth, CHALLENGE's communist analysis shines through the fog of illusions.

A West Coast comrade

Army Uses High College Costs to Trap Enlistees

I was recently leaving school when I noticed a large recreational vehicle parked just off campus. It was loaded with video equipment and flashing displays. I thought it was just another expensive advertisement for a car company or a soft drink, but then I noticed two Army recruiters standing next to it. One of their brochures, printed in Spanish and in English, showed a serious-looking young man repairing a helicopter engine. It promoted the idea that the Army provides an invaluable education for army recruits to get a technical job after leaving the military. It also stated that then one could get up to \$25,000

Here's my telephone number, call me"; "We did it!"; "I'm ready for the next struggle," emotional workers told a comrade after more than 100 workers stopped production and confronted the boss. They were demanding reinstatement of a worker fired that morning for protesting the lowering of the piece-rate. Several women took key leadership, including pulling the electricity on several machines, forcing those working on them to support the work stoppage. Facing this pressure from angry workers, the boss gave in, rehired the worker and even asked "forgiveness" for pushing and firing the worker.

A few days later, a 40 year old co-worker unfortunately died of a heart attack after work. When the boss refused to permit the workers to attend the funeral and say their final farewell to their co-worker, more than 80% of the workers stopped working, left the factory and went to the funeral. For the boss, making profits is everything.

Stopping production twice in a week wasn't easy for the workers. They had to overcome the fear of being fired and any lack of confidence that their co-workers wouldn't support them. But class solidarity and class hatred of injustice and exploitation overcame these obstacles.

Our PLP garment industry collective has discussed how to draw out and put into practice the revolutionary communist lessons of this struggle. The first strike over the piece-rate protest and firing creates the opportunity to expose capitalism and its murderous wage system enslaving us our whole lives. We can advance the goal of eliminating wage slavery and its wage system, in a communist society where we all produce and receive according to our needs.

The second strike fostered solidarity with our late co-worker. This tragedy exposed capitalism as a killer of thousands of workers on the altar of its bloody profits. Garment workers have no health insurance or decent working conditions. This friend and co-worker leaves a family at the mercy of poverty, without life insurance or a pension. Under communism, workers' health and well-being will be primary.

These struggles show a small but important advance in the revolutionary ideas of a group of co-workers with whom we've had hundreds of lunch-time political discussions over the last three years. Building on small changes will lead to bigger ones. We can now make a qualitative leap with some of the CHALLENGE readers and a group of friends who discuss the ideas in the paper. This can lead to an expanded readership and recruitment of new comrades to the long-term struggle for workers' power. The push of fascist repression in the factories opens the door to building the Party and spreading its ideas.

West Coast Red Worker



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towards a college education.

This slick display designed to recruit working-class urban youth from my campus made me ponder why the Army needs to pay for its soldiers' college education once they get out? Why isn't it free?

Many of my students come from public high schools which haven't prepared them for college. They struggle through their classes while holding down one or even two jobs. One had to take a job over an hour away in order to pay for school. Tuition costs are skyrocketing, way up this year and rising again next year. Meanwhile, federal and state programs are now forcing students on financial aid to severely limit the number and variety of courses they can take. No more liberal arts classes for students on financial aid. Free college education died when the ruling class discovered it could get away with charging people for such public services. To most of my students free college education is as exotic an idea as free health care. They've never seen it, so it's hard for them to imagine it.

When I talk to my students about having a free education, it's a concept that, like free health care, resonates with them. I tell them we must organize and fight for this right. But when the ruling class forces us to work harder and harder to survive, it's difficult to become organized. PLP members must help to educate and organize workers and students to see the patterns of capitalism and become communist organizers themselves. Communism means free education, free health care, a secure retirement. Communism means everyone shares in the wealth our class produces.

A College Teacher in Brooklyn

O'Casey: 'Communism is the Way'

Readers might be interested in some parts of a letter from the great Irish playwright Sean O'Casey to a good-spirited (socialist) religious friend (in March 1942):

"While I believe that Socialism (I'd rather say communism) will inevitably come, I don't think it will come trotting up to us as readily as you seem to think. Wasn't it Lenin who said 'Communism won't come to us as a scheduled train comes, puffing up to time, into a first-class [train] station.' There will be a big fight for it...."

"Communism, so far from being the end, is but the beginning. I look for it, not that we must rest from our labors, but that we may begin them. They have begun in the USSR; we haven't been able to start yet. No one can determine now how we can

prevent things from being mismanaged or abused under Socialism; that must be evolved during the transition period, out of actual experience....

"But be assured, the struggle when Communism comes will not be less, but greater; but achievement will be certain....The big thing now is the terrible economic immorality under which we live and suffer and die. That controlled, all other things will reach a healthy and vigorous level....And, to me, Communism is the gateway."

Urges Better Editing

One of the most important organizing tools we have as a Party is our newspaper, and an important aspect of CHALLENGE is how it's edited. Editing is very difficult and the CHALLENGE editors do a great job, such as for the review of "What Is To Be Done?" submitted a few weeks ago. The opening sentence was changed to: "The struggle against reformism is a life-and-death question for the world's workers." Not only did this draw out the essence of what the author was saying, it also sharpened the line. This type of editing is both helpful and necessary.

Unfortunately, sometimes editing can distort the message an author is attempting to transmit. For example, in an article from Challenge (2/18/04), entitled "Internationalism Trumps Nationalism at MEChA Conference," the original article didn't say that internationalist politics overcame deep-rooted nationalist ideologies. In fact, an extremely nationalist rap group performed at this conference the same night as the woman who spoke. This confusion was not completely the fault of the editor, since the article didn't include enough of these signs of the continuing presence of nationalist politics.

It's imperative that the dialectical nature of base-building be taken into account when writing to CHALLENGE. There are two mistakes we can make when analyzing our struggle. One is to trivialize the obstacles that we must overcome. The other is pessimism about the potential for growth within our base. Both these mistakes are dangerous to our Party's development.

Before submitting this article, the city committee discussed whether or not to say that what happened "showed the potential to win many of these young people." This became a sharp political struggle over whether or not it was truly possible to win large numbers of these young people to the Party over time. We decided it was possible and to put "many." Our experience over the last year showed we should not become pessimistic about the potential towards winning these young people.

In fact, we've already gone a long way towards developing a solid base in MEChA within a relatively short period of time. One example: a resolution proposed by a PL member against the war in Iraq was passed unanimously in the region. One young woman (who is now closer to the Party) stood up for use of the word "Fascism" within the resolution.

Yet we know that to win these people will take a lot of hard work and intense struggle. When CHALLENGE decided to print this headline and to change the first sentence to state that "working-class internationalism won out over nationalism and liberalism," it seemed to say we had

continued on next page

MORE LETTERS

already overcome nationalism. This trivialization of obstacles can be dangerous. We want our base to know that CHALLENGE prints the whole dialectical truth. I'm confident that our team of editors will continue to do just that.

Comradely, Editing the Editor

Fighting Hospital's Racism

A group of friends were discussing the situation of the respiratory therapists in the John Stroger Hospital (formerly known as Cook County Hospital). A group of respiratory therapists, mostly Indians, were certified in their field but were never promoted. They had less salary so they filed a grievance. The higher grade (16) respiratory therapists, mostly black, are being made to pass a certification test by March 31 or lose their jobs.

This mess was done by a right-wing leadership of SEIU Local 73 HC which was ousted after highly contested elections. The new more "progressive" leadership has done little about the situation.

There was an article in the past CHALLENGE and also a flyer put out by the friends and members of PLP. Both were excellent.

The main thing we have to do it to break down the barriers of racism which help the capitalists. In the now gone House Committee of Un-American Activities a man was accused of being a member of the communist party. The Committee asked the accuser how he knew the man was a communist. The accuser answered that the man invited his black and Hispanic friends to his apartment.

Reading and writing about anti-racism is certainly important. We must put it into practice. It is important and it is fun to learn about other cultures.

The bosses give the impression that they favor one ethnic group above the other. In most cases, they do not favor all the members of each ethnic group.

We must talk to those that are not bought off. In some countries there are strong leftist movements and talk about communism is not out of this world. The ethnic barriers must be broken. If a situation is hot, the chance of success is great. Under normal situations, it is a long but rewarding process.

If we get even a paragraph in the native language of another language of the ethnic groups,

that is a success.

In the early days of PLP in the hospital, we made some multi-ethnic dinners with each person bringing a dish from their respective country.

Theory and practice in fighting racism and capitalism are inseparable. Read CHALLENGE. Go beyond the labor union limits.

A red pharmacist

WHY ARE UNIONS FAILING?

The NY Daily News is running articles exposing some corrupt union leaders and making that the reason why union membership is nose-diving, with almost 90% of the workforce non-union. But the cause of this decline is not a few "bad apples." Rather it's the majority of "good leaders" who also collect six-figure salaries and CEO-style pensions and expense accounts while their members are losing millions of jobs, pensions and health benefits.

Unions were born in labor's struggle against capitalist bosses who enslaved them. Unions grew to the extent they forced the bosses to back off on some of the oppression and give workers a little more of the vast wealth that was stolen from them. At a crucial point in that struggle, the labor movement split between communist workers who wanted to continue the militant fight against the bosses, and business unionists who wanted to ban communists from the unions, discourage strikes, become the bosses' lieutenants and accept the system that exploits us all, in exchange for a slice of the capitalists' pie. These class collaborationists won that battle and turned unions into businesses profiting "leaders" who negotiated sellout contracts, raised dues and made members pay for their lavish life-styles so they could mingle as "equals" with the corporate bosses.

Today workers are back to square one because corporate and union capitalists can only be successful by accelerating the oppression of the working class. The challenge for the working class is to build the class struggle against the ruling class and capitalist wage slavery while fighting for a communist world based on workers' needs. And the challenge for the Party is the nurturing and development of communists who can rise to that task.

Union Activist

'Quality Work' Leads to Mass Layoff At Delphi Mexico Plant

MEXICO CITY, March 2 — Being one of the most productive workforces in Mexico got 1,463 workers fired at the U.S.-owned Delphi plant in Delicias, a small city in Chihuahua state. The factory manufactures electric wires and cables for cars. They're productive — "The work at the plant is of good quality," boss Xochitl Diaz told La Jornada (2/29) — but not "competitive" says Delphi, the area's largest employer. They are among the "best paid" in the region: 70 pesos (about \$6) a DAY.

Delicias, a city in a semi-desert area, was built 70 years ago. Delphi has been operating there for almost 20 years. Now, as part of the bosses' worldwide drive to "compete" for maximum profits, the Delphi workers — and the thousands more who depend on them and on doing business with the company — are out on the street.

Many workers think the plant is being moved to China, where labor is cheaper. But actually Delphi's setting up shop in another area of Chihuahua state, where workers earn even less.

The Delicias workers' contract

provided for an 800-peso monthly bonus (some \$73) if they didn't have more than one unjustified absence.

When the union presented the workers with the bosses' demand to eliminate the bonus or there'd be no new contract, the workers rejected it, knowing the contract wouldn't guarantee anything, including their jobs. For the first time in its 25-year existence in Mexico, the world's biggest auto parts company didn't sign a union contract.

Delphi is the second largest private employer in Mexico, with 35,000 workers in 24 plants (second only to Wal-Mart). Delphi employs 192,000 workers in 171 plants worldwide.

Since the U.S. economy fell into recession in the second half of 2000, hundreds of thousands of maquiladora jobs have been lost in Mexico's border states. Delphi plans to eliminate jobs in Mexico and worldwide, mostly in the U.S.

Capitalism is a system only interested in maximum profits, not in the lives of workers. They want us to blame workers in China, Detroit or in nearby Sinaloa or Sonora. But this is just a bosses' weapon to provoke us to fight each other instead of their system. Workers need international unity to fight a capitalist system hell-bent on endless wars and "job-cutting competitiveness." The communist slogan of "Workers of the World, Unite!" is now more important than ever. ☼



Autoworkers like these in the VW plant in Puebla, also hit by mass job cuttings, need to unite all over the world, to fight their enemy: capitalism.

RED EYE ON THE NEWS

BELOW ARE EXCERPTS FROM MAINSTREAM NEWSPAPERS THAT CONTAIN IMPORTANT INFORMATION: Abbreviations: NYT=New York Times, GW=Guardian Weekly (UK)

Gates' son probes charity

Capitalist....philanthropist...[Bill] Gates...tells a story about his four-year-old son Rory. "We were putting together these kits for homeless people — you know, where you put in the toothbrush and toothpaste — and Rory says: 'This is really nice, Dad, but if these people are homeless, why don't we give them homes?'"

"It's kind of a good question...." (GW, 2/18)

GI quits US aggression

When his unit was ordered to Iraq, he refused to go....

Private first class Hinzman left the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, taking his wife and son to Canada....He is battling the US military in the Canadian courts....

On the telephone from Toronto, PFC Hinzman said: "I signed up to defend my country, not to carry out an act of aggression." (GW, 3/3)

On US TV, he finds WMDs!

The Israeli...nuclear weapon...figure now is estimated to be between 100 and 400....

There was a funny bit on American television during the run-up to the invasion of Iraq and frenzy over possible "Weapons

of Mass Destruction." A Syrian diplomat was being questioned by Tim Russert on "Meet the Press about whether Iraq had shipped WMDs to his country for hiding. No, the Syrian said. But Russert pressed on and his guest said: "Yes, there are such weapons in the Middle East, and I can lead you to them."

"Where, where are they?" said Russert, who was getting excited.

"They're in Israel!" said the Syrian.

Russert changed the subject. (Universal Press Syndicate, 2/13)

Profits before kids' health

The W.H.O [World Health Organization] has drafted a "global strategy on diet, physical activity and health...."

The plan has provoked an outcry from the American food industry — especially the Sugar Association....

The administration and sugar industry...seem particularly disturbed at W.H.O.'s proposals that countries be urged to limit advertising, especially ads directed at children, encouraging unhealthy diets.... (NYT editorial, 1/2)

CIA protected Mexico nazi

MEXICO CITY, Feb. 19 — The former chief of Mexico's secret police, Miguel

Nazar Haro, was arrested here on charges of kidnapping a leftist leader 29 years ago....during Mexico's "dirty war" against the left, which lasted from the 1960's to the 1980's. Hundreds...were arrested, tortured and killed by state agents....

[Nazar Haro]...was an important liaison for the CIA during the 1970's and early 1980's, providing the United States with information on leftists throughout Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean, American officials say.

The CIA blocked his indictment by federal grand jury in San Diego in 1982....

The CIA argued successfully that the importance of the information gleaned from Mexico's secret police overrode the interests of United States law enforcement. (NYT, 2/20)

Imperialists bled Haiti

One of the things all Haitians can agree on is their pride in Toussant L'Ouverture, who led the slave rebellion....

From the outset Haiti inherited the wrath of the colonial powers, which knew what disastrous example a Haitian success story would be....

Haiti is a reminder of how Western 'democracies' have willfully amassed their wealth on the backs of impoverished dictators.



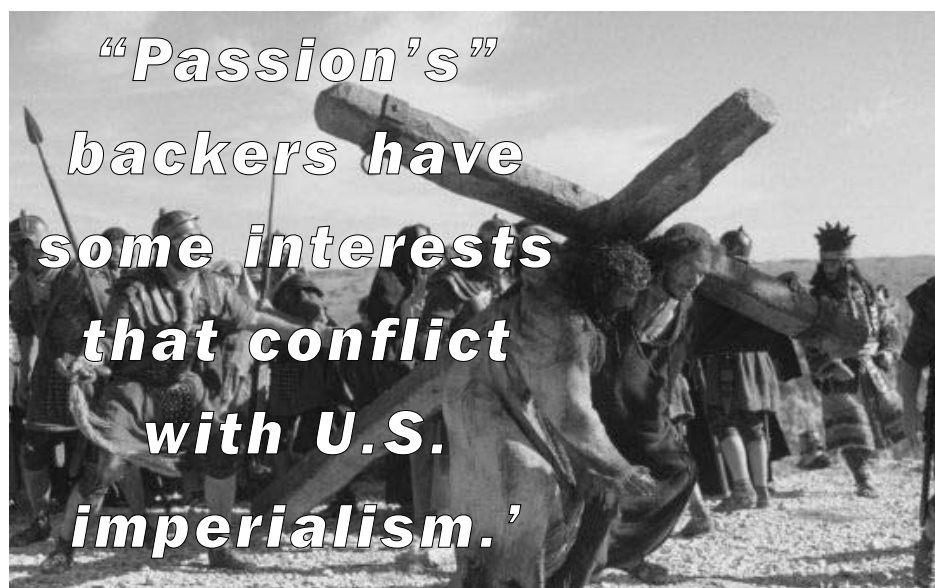
So Haiti lurched from coup to coup....

France, backed by the US, later ordered Haiti to pay 150 m[illion] francs in gold as reparations to compensate former plantation and slave owners as well as for the costs of the war in return for international recognition. At today's prices that would amount to 18 b[illion]. By the end of the 19th century, 80% of Haiti's national budget was going to pay off the loan and its interest, and the country was locked into the role of debtor nation — where it remains today. (GW, 3/3)

'The Passion of The Christ' Gibson's Anti-Semitism—Bosses' Lethal Weapon

Culture wars can lead straight into shooting wars. The furor over Mel Gibson's anti-Semitic new movie, for instance, hinges on the politics of U.S. imperialism. "The Passion of the Christ" squarely blames Jews for the crucifixion rather than the Romans who were the only ones who could carry out such punishment. So the liberal U.S. media are in a front-page, prime-time frenzy, worrying that "Passion" will "whip up intolerance," "harm Christian-Jewish relations," or — and this is the real concern — "incite anger or violence toward Jewish individuals or the State of Israel." (Orange County Register, 2/18) Presently, the main U.S. rulers, whom the liberal media serve, rely on Israel to police the western flank of their Mideast oil empire, while they themselves are at war at its heart, Iraq, and its northern fringe, Afghanistan. The liberals fear that Gibson's film could turn public sentiment against the Israeli stormtroopers who help guard Exxon Mobil's profits.

"Passion's" backers have some interests that conflict with U.S. imperialism. Newmarket Films, the outfit distributing the movie in North America, is controlled by Helkon Media of Germany. European capitalists have long chafed at U.S. support for Israel and U.S. domination of Mideast oil. The U.S.-Europe rivalry also explains why Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls declared that the Pope had given "Passion" a pontifical thumbs-up. "It is as it was," Navarro-Valls quoted the Pope as saying after a private screening. Navarro-Valls is a leader of Opus Dei, a secretive, right-



wing Catholic sect funded by anti-U.S. European capitalists.

But don't think for a minute that the main, liberal wing of U.S. capitalism is fundamentally opposed to anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism remains a powerful weapon in the rulers' arsenal. They dust it off when they need it. Anti-Semitism has been particularly helpful to the main wing in bringing fascistic discipline to the business world. The rulers set the stage for the current prosecution of Enron, Worldcom, and the rest over a decade ago by demonizing and jailing financiers Ivan Boesky, Michael Milken, Dennis Levine and Martin Siegel, who happened to be Jewish. Books from mainstream publishers bore ominous titles like "Den of Thieves," "Predators' Ball" and "Barbarians at the Gate" and decried the "greed" of Wall Street investors. Gibson's movie would prove useful, should the rulers require a similar purge in the future. And there's no guarantee that Israel's pro-U.S. rulers

will stay in power forever. If Israel were to cease being Washington's lackey, any tempering of anti-Semitism in the U.S. would vanish. That's why the liberal media have chosen to publicize rather than suppress "Passion," even as they criticize it.

A Two-Hour Torture

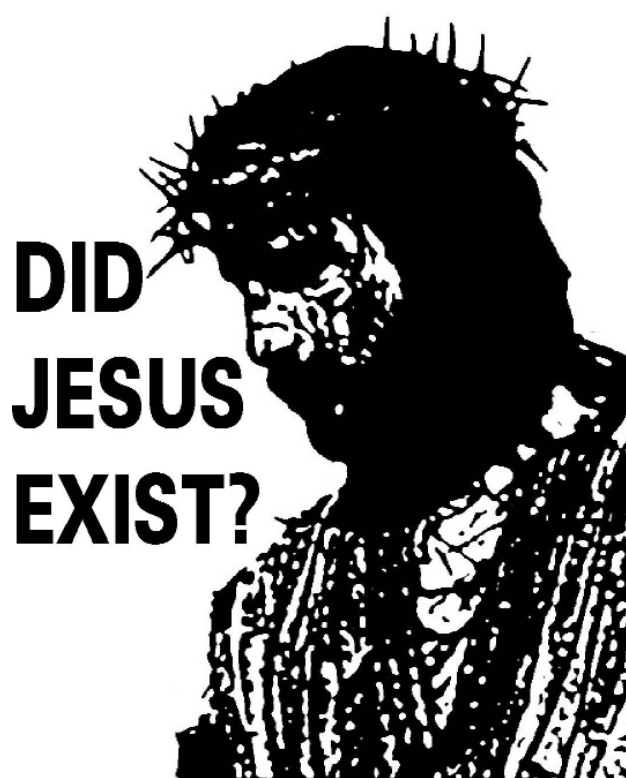
Esthetically, "the Passion of the Christ" is a two-hour torture of the audience. It alternates between stereotypical Jew-baiting and an agonizing, graphic focus on pain and death. A viewer who can recall reading a Catholic geography book saying that "the Jews are the most sorrowful people on Earth because they abandoned Jesus" — in a classroom adorned with only a crucifix, will know just where Gibson's repulsive ideas and images come from. His Catholicism goes back to the days before Vatican II, when declining membership forced the church to liberalize briefly.

Some opportunist church leaders then went so far as to say that aspects of Marxism, short of workers' holding state power, of course, were compatible with Catholicism. They called the mix "liberation theology."

But now, under John Paul II, the pendulum has swung back. The pre-Vatican II church's condemnation of Jews — which it only recently retracted — and its mystical, medieval symbols glorifying suffering, are what Gibson projects onto the screen. (By the way, the earliest symbol of Christianity was not the torturing cross but a fish, representing the weekly meal that members used to share.)

Not a single Jewish character gets a sympathetic portrayal. Jews are either pompous high priests, conspiring to safeguard their own privileged position, or mindless rabble. Christians, however, from the Marys to the disciples, are beatific. Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, comes across as a philosophical man, deeply conflicted. In reality, Pilate was a relentless hard-liner who so antagonized the masses of Jerusalem by forcing Roman state religion on them that he was recalled by the Emperor. Gibson ignores this opposition to the Roman empire as well as the early Christians' egalitarianism.

Gibson preaches filth; that's for sure. But the liberals are no better. Their pleas for tolerance mask an agenda of intensifying fascism and war. ☹



DID
JESUS
EXIST?

If Mel Gibson's film "The Passion of the Christ," was about Allah, the Taliban could have made it. What's more, these two hours of torture are based on myth. What's real is the \$117 million it made for Gibson in the first week.

These profits were spurred by mass free publicity from the media, the controversy it caused, and organized religion's purchase of millions of tickets. Besides being gory ("The Passion according to Marquis de Sade" says

Newsweek), it revives the old anti-Semitic lie that the "Jews killed Christ." It could become the next Protocols of Zion, the forgery created by the Tsar's secret police a century ago and distributed worldwide by Henry Ford, used to carry out pogroms against the Jews in Russia, Eastern Europe and finally the Holocaust (denied by Gibson's father).

It's graphic depiction of the torture and crucifixion of Jesus could translate into, "it is good to suffer to save U.S. imperialism from anti-Christian forces like the Islamic fundamentalists."

Unfortunately many people treat all this as "historical fact." It's assumed that Jesus' crucifixion is an historical event, the truth of which needs to be uncovered (and then depicted). But history is not on the side of this myth.

When the Roman Empire ruled the Middle East there were at least several "Jesuses," a Greek name corresponding to "Joshua." The New Testament is written in Greek.

In the Old Testament, Joshua was the great general of the Jews who wiped out the Canaanites, so many rebels assumed the name of "Joshua," or "Jesus" in Greek.

There are a number of these known to history, but NONE at the time of the Biblical story of Jesus. Not one. There is historical evidence for King Herod, Pontius Pilate, even John the Baptist, even James "the brother of the Lord," called Jesus' brother in the Book of Acts, but NOT for Jesus.

Modern scholarship suggests there was some kind of historical figure behind the "Jesus" figure — probably a rebel of some kind, or several of them. But the "Jesus" stories in the New Testament are mythical.

Some helpful information is available at these webpages:

<http://human.st/jesuspuzzle/jhcjp.htm> — this writer, Earl Doherty, is a respected non-religious scholar of the period.

<http://www.positiveatheism.org/hist/maccoby.htm> Hyam Maccoby, is a Zionist, but knows his stuff. He takes the "Rebel" viewpoint.

http://chss.montclair.edu/english/furr/essays/incredible_shrinking_son_of_man.html — this is about the best short thing around. Price is brilliant, and a former Fundamentalist who was led by the evidence first to skepticism, later to atheism.

Price's latest book, also called "The Incredible Shrinking Son of Man" (Prometheus Press), is terrific, scholarly, full of humor, well-written, and the best thing in print. To listen to a lecture by Price, go to this page. (You'll need "RealPlayer"): <http://chss.montclair.edu/english/furr/gh/pri-cequesthw.html>

Price also has a very scholarly book, "Deconstructing Jesus."

Finally, see the articles in the current COMMUNIST MAGAZINE on religion and in the old PL Magazine, Vol. 14, No. 2, Summer-Fall 1981, pp. 59. It's a review of Maccoby (see above), with lots of historical information, though it's over 20 years old now.

A final note: Christianity began making a big deal about who killed Jesus when Emperor Constantine made Christianity the official religion of Rome. This changed the ideology of the early Christians, the one Engels compared to young communards. Constantine turning Christianity into the official religion meant that the ordinary Christian was to be fatalistically in the hands of their priest who was ordained by the state. This is not irrational; it's class ideology to serve Rome's rulers. ☹